Sleep: Why is it so important?

Sleep is critically important for physical and mental health. The causes of sleep deprivation can be choosing work or play over adequate sleep, stress and medical or mental health conditions.



The initial signs of lack of sleep are irritability, moodiness and disinhibition. If the problem is not corrected, then the person may start to experience apathy, slowed speech and flattened emotional responses, impaired memory and poor cognitive processing.

The consequences of sleep deprivation are as follows:

In the short term:

- Decreased performance and alertness reducing one's nighttime sleep by 1.5 hours for just one night can result in as much as a 32% reduction in daytime alertness.
- Memory and cognitive impairment decreasing your ability to think, remember and process information.
- Stress on relationships due to moodiness and irritability.
- Increased work injuries and automobile accidents, which are often associated with sleepiness.

In the long term, sleep deprivation is associated with:

- Medical issues, such as, high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, and obesity.
- Psychiatric problems, including depression and anxiety.

Insomnia (the difficulty initiating and maintaining sleep) is reported to affect up to one-third of Americans. Situational- induced insomnia usually resolves in less than two weeks. If insomnia continues beyond two weeks or has been a constant or periodic problem for an individual, then treatment is crucial for his or her health. The types of treatment for insomnia are divided into medical and behavioral. In general, if you are having insomnia, it is best to consult your doctor to get assessed for an underlying medical cause. Behavioral treatments include steps to improve sleep hygiene and stress management as well as relaxation techniques. Below are some ideas to improve sleep hygiene and induce relaxation.

Maintain a set sleep schedule seven	Avoid mentally stimulating activities in bed, so
days a week.	the bed is associated with sleep and sex.
Sleep until rested, but do not oversleep.	Do relaxation exercises prior to bed to relax muscles and slow down thoughts.
Avoid caffeine in the afternoon and evening.	Minimize noise and excess light - Earplugs are wonderful!
Avoid alcohol and cigarettes close to	Leave the bed for 10 to 15 minutes if you have
bedtime.	not fallen asleep in twenty minutes.
Do not go to bed hungry.	Exercise regularly, but not within four to five hours before bedtime.



Sleep disturbance is a common issue that brings individuals to **EAP**. Please contact us with any concerns in this area.

Alegent Creighton Health EAP (402)398-5566 or (888)847-4975.